



FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES

April 5, 2023

School Gardens: Using Gardens to Grow Healthy Habits in Cafeterias, Classrooms and Communities

We found Spring! Have you ever read the book *"The Corner" from Frog and Toad All Year*, by Arnold Lobel? In this story, Frog tells Toad about the time he went looking for spring around every corner but doesn't find it until he turns the corner of his home and discovers his parents working in their garden.

Spring brings with it a sense of renewal and a flurry of activity, including school gardens. Schools are using gardens to help children connect where food comes from and to develop healthy eating habits at an early age. [Food Safety Tips for School Gardens](#) is a great resource for potential food safety risks that should be applied. Funds from the nonprofit school food service account to cover expenditures related to farm to school activities and school gardens, review [Farm to School and School Garden Expenses](#).

This USDA [fact sheet](#) for farm to school stakeholders provides examples of school gardens that have taken root, and resources to continue growth.

School Garden Resource Links










[DESE - Farm to School](#)

[Food Safety Tips for
School Gardens](#)

[Farm to School and
School
Garden Expenses](#)

[School Garden Q&A's](#)

The Benefits of School Gardens

-  Empowers students to eat healthy foods.
-  Improves student achievement, wellbeing, and behavior.
-  Helps teachers and students get hands-on with curriculum.
-  Brings students into the great outdoors.
-  Fosters a love and appreciation of nature.
-  Provides an immersive location for students to explore.
-  Develops teamwork and social skills between peers.
-  Provides a calming environment for learning.
-  And much more!

Mrs. Meghan Dudenhoeffer, pictured below in the left photo, is the art teacher at South Elementary School in Jefferson City. She is also the caretaker for the school's outdoor garden, and the indoor tower garden which was purchased through a grant from JC Healthy Schools. She said students get to see the fruits of their labor when they get to eat the produce they've helped grow in the indoor and outdoor gardens. Surprisingly, the children aren't squeamish when it comes to trying them, Dudenhoeffer said. Having grown the plants themselves adds a special element, meaning even children who are pretty picky will give them a try. Besides enjoying the flavor, students also get to learn about the growing process as they watch the seeds take off. "I like to share my love of gardening with them. It makes me happy," Dudenhoeffer said.



LEA Seamless Summer Options for Summer 2023

1. Seamless Summer Option (SSO) If one or more of your buildings have area eligibility due to having at least 50% Free and Reduced students as of October 2022 (or any other claim month during SY22-23) **OR** [census data](#), these buildings are eligible to operate Open SSO Sites if that is what you wish to do for summer school.

a. If you would like to operate SSO for Summer 2023, please complete the SSO building application for the eligible building(s) you wish to operate SSO. Notes to keep in mind when completing the application:

1. Question 5 Select "No" unless the building is an institution/RCCI.
2. Question 6. Only enter months of SSO operation
3. Question 10. Select "Open" and how the building is eligible. OPEN is the only option for Summer 2023.
4. Question 14: Indicate advertising dates and method of advertisement for the Open SSO Site. Open SSO sites must advertise to the public, inviting all children up to 18 for free meals on a first come, first serve basis. An advertising template can be found [here](#).

b. Further information, guidance, and templates regarding SSO can be found on the [Feeding Children in the Summer](#) page of the DESE-FNS website.

2. Operate National School Lunch Program (NSLP) where enrolled students pay for meals based on free, reduced, and paid benefits and claims will receive the NSLP reimbursement rate.

3. **Apply for Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** provided through the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). *SFSP vs SSO* is a good resource to determine which program will work best for your school.

Here is another resource to help you determine which program to use for summer school, provided by the USDA: [Seamless Summer and Other Options for Schools](#). It breaks down each available program with guidance.

Reminders and Important Information

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) provides the option to offer free meals to all students in eligible high poverty Local Education Agencies (LEA) and schools without collecting household applications. Eligible LEAs and schools use a claiming percentage based on the number of identified students (primarily directly certified students) of at least 40%, multiplied by a factor of 1.6, to determine a free claiming percentage. The difference between the free claiming percentage and 100% determines the percentage of meals to claim in the paid category.

LEA's can find additional information on our website. [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) | Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education \(mo.gov\)](#) LEA's will want to remember to conduct their Direct Match with their **April 1** data. It is noted that April 1 this year is on a Saturday but you can run the April 1 data as soon as possible. If you need additional assistance with Direct Match, please see our website at (<https://dese.mo.gov/data-system-management/core-datamosis/training>) or to the DirectMatch Manual (<https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/directmatch-manual>).

Please note the following dates information is due to us.

- Direct Match- Use April 1 data
- ISP Support List Report- April 15
- CEP Policy Statement- June 30
- ISP Supporting Documentation- June 30
- ISP worksheets (per site)- June 30
- Web Application- June 30

Again all of this information and instructions on how to complete can be found on our website [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) | Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education \(mo.gov\)](#) For additional information on CEP contact Kyle Heislen at 573-522-9849 or kyle.heislen@dese.mo.gov. For information on Direct Match contact Kelsey Kukharev at 573-526-5287 or Kelsey.kukharev@dese.mo.gov

Title 1 Updates

The purpose of this guidance is to share updates for making within-district Title 1 allocations under Title 1, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1956 (ESEA). The link to Updated Title 1 Guidance for Making Within District Allocations for SY 2023-2024 is on the website here <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/title-1-guidance-school-year-2023-2024>.

Excess Balance Letters

If your district has an excess balance, an email was sent to the LEA's Authorized Representative on either March 27th or 28th. Please reach out to Becky Hart at Becky.Hart@dese.mo.gov or 573-751-4402 for questions and responses.

P-EBT Final Deadline

School Leaders:

If you need to submit reconsiderations for any students who were **not** included on the first P-EBT submission who missed consuming a free or reduced-price meal at school due to a COVID-19 related absence during the 2021-2022 school year now is the time to do so.

If your school has experienced calls from parents/guardians regarding a COVID-related absence for their student during the 2021-2022 school year now is the time to submit the student's information so that the family receives the benefits.

The purpose of P-EBT benefits is to provide eligible children a P-EBT benefit if they would have received a free or reduced-price meal at their school through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) if not for a COVID-related absence, a school closure or reduced attendance of their school. Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals who missed school for a COVID-related reason for any school day starting September 1, 2022 through the end of the regular school year are eligible. It is critical the school submits ALL the required information to help our office ensure these benefits are processed accurately.

If you need to review the training and guidance please visit the [P-EBT](#) website or call our office for immediate assistance.

Final deadline to submit this data is **April 18, 2023**.

We appreciate your help!

USDA Foods Update

April Bonus Entitlement is still available and our final Brown Box offering was sent out on March 29th by Gabriele Pacheco with Gold Star. Please request only quantities that you will add to your next scheduled delivery.

- Brown Box Bonus Foods – reply to the Bonus email that is sent to your district's authorized representative. Contact us at donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov for assistance.
- DOD Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Funds – email requests to donatedfoods@dese.mo.gov
- Additional FFS and NOI pounds are available – contact your processor's representative [Processor/Broker Contact Information | Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education \(mo.gov\)](#)

Fajita Chicken Strips

- April's delivery of Diced Chicken 100101 was cancelled by USDA. Therefore, we will substitute Chicken Fajita Strips 100117 in its place.
- Fair Share Chicken Fajita Strips 100117 – we received multiple bonus trucks of this product and are distributing it to all school districts participating in the Commodity Foods Program. It will be allocated based on the Total Lunches Served. If you do not have need for this product or storage is an issue, it may be offered to FACS classrooms, PTA groups or sports groups, childcare programs, offered to neighboring districts or otherwise used as the district elects. DESE does not require documentation on how the product was used.

Gold Star Account Reminder - Please take a moment to review the commodity foods in your Gold Star “Live Inventory” and plan April orders to receive all of the remaining brown box and Fee For Service items you have requested on your commodity packet for this school year. All items you have processed must be delivered in this school year. Commodity items remaining in your Gold Star account will be automatically shipped to your school if you have not selected them for delivery.



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